United Nations A/72/PV.115

General Assembly
Seventy-second session

Official Records

115th plenary meeting
Thursday, 13 September 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 140 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/72/713/Add. 6)

The President: Before proceeding to the item on our agenda, in keeping with established practice I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/72/713/Add. 6, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/72/713/Add.5, Libya has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/72/713/Add. 6?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 65 (*continued*)

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace

The President: Members will recall that, in resolution 72/243 of 22 December 2017, the Assembly decided that the opening plenary meeting of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit will feature statements by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-third session, the Secretary-General, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and an eminent person and a representative of civil society, both of whom were to be identified by the President of the Assembly.

In that connection, and as announced in my letter circulated on 11 September, I propose that the opening plenary meeting also feature statements by the President of the Republic of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Ireland.

In order for the Assembly to take up this proposal, it must first agree, under rule 81 of its rules of procedure, to reconsider the provision contained in paragraph 3 of resolution 72/243.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to reconsider the provision contained in paragraph 3 of resolution 72/243?

It was so decided.

The President: May I also take it that the General Assembly wishes to decide that the opening plenary meeting of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to be known as the Nelson Mandela Peace Summit will also feature statements by the President of the Republic of South Africa and the Prime Minister of Ireland?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 65.

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Agenda item 131

Sexual exploitation and abuse: implementing a zero-tolerance policy

Report of the Secretary-General (A/72/751 and A/72/751/Corr.1)

Draft resolution (A/72/L.69)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/72/L.69.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the following countries: Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan, as well as my own country, Egypt.

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important and timely meeting, and the Secretary-General for his report (A/72/751) under this agenda item. Last year, Egypt, together with Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan, initiated resolution 71/278, on United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse, out of our commitment to combating and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and our willingness to mobilize international consensus in support of that noble cause under the auspices of the General Assembly. Resolution 71/278 was the first milestone on a path towards a system-wide approach to implementing our zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The resolution commended peacekeepers and the sacrifices that they make in order to maintain international peace and security. It reaffirmed the commitment to a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system, including the civilian component of peacekeeping missions.

The main sponsors of this year's draft resolution on the same topic, contained in document A/72/L.69, agreed that it represents a genuine opportunity for the international community to renew its commitment to uniting to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. With this draft resolution, we will also have the chance to delve into deeper discussions on the subject during the seventy-third session.

Finally, we would like to thank the general membership for supporting this draft resolution, and we look forward to its adoption by consensus.

I would now like to make a statement in my national capacity.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Egypt is committed to supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations by establishing an item related to sexual exploitation and abuse on the agenda of the General Assembly, in accordance with resolution 71/278, entitled "United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse", which will provide an opportunity for Member States, particularly those that contribute troops to peacekeeping operations, to discuss all views on the policy's implementation.

Egypt's interest in combating such crimes has been reflected in our President's joining the Circle of Leadership and his participation in the high-level meeting convened on the margins of the General Assembly on the topic on 18 September 2017. Egypt believes that the initiative to join the voluntary compact to fight crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse and give momentum to the collective efforts of Member States and the Secretariat to fight such crimes is a positive one. I am therefore honoured to announce from this rostrum my Government's decision to endorse the joint communiqué of the Circle of Leadership on fighting sexual exploitation and abuse, and the joint declaration on peacekeeping operations adopted in the light of the Secretary-General's initiative in this respect. The President of Egypt will also take part in the high-level meeting to be held on the margins of the opening of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly on 25 September. Those national directives are fully consistent with Egypt's role in maintaining peace and security in the past few decades. Egypt is one of the biggest contributors of troops and police to peacekeeping operations all over the world, in particular in Africa.

Egypt takes note of the Secretary-General's recommendations in his report entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse" (A/72/751), particularly those related to working together with Member States to end the scourge of impunity, holding those implicated in such crimes accountable, encouraging countries to deploy national investigators in peacekeeping operations when needed, and conducting the necessary investigations in accordance with international norms while taking appropriate measures pursuant to national laws. We stress that troop-contributing countries should be given the support they need to uphold those standards.

We emphasize that victims of sexual exploitation and abuse should be provided with every form of support, including through the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the appointment of the first Victims' Rights Advocate, for legal, psychological and medical support.

The sacrifices made by the tens of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers who are working to protect civilians in extremely difficult conditions require that we refrain from stigmatizing troop-contributing States based on isolated cases and from imposing collective punishments on participating units. It is therefore important to raise awareness and to conduct training courses before and during the deployment of troops, as well as to enable and build the capacities of Member States so as to ensure that national investigation teams are dispatched speedily to places where claims of abuse have been made, and to decisively apply the law to whomever is shown to have committed such crimes.

In conclusion, Egypt trains and qualifies its peacekeeping troops to fight sexual exploitation and abuse in accordance with United Nations standards. Cairo's International Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding provides specialized training courses for deployed troops in order to raise their awareness and enhance the prevention of such violations.

Egypt has been recognized for its efforts to implement the zero-tolerance policy as part of the description of Member States' best practices related to addressing and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse included in the Secretary-General's report for last year (A/71/818). These practices include launching investigations rapidly, and expeditiously establishing responsibility and imposing punishment when crimes are proven.

Lastly, Egypt expresses its readiness to cooperate with the Secretariat and share its experience with other troop-contributing countries to help them build their capacity to combat crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse and eliminate them as quickly as possible, with a view to making international peacekeeping operations more effective and credible.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/72/L.69, entitled "United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of draft resolution A/72/L.69, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors: Belarus, Burundi, Guatemala, Indonesia, Lebanon, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/72/L.69?

Draft resolution A/72/L.69 was adopted (resolution 72/312).

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of position after adoption, I would like to remind speakers that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Strainic (United States of America): The United States welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to effectively addressing the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse, and its collective support for the United Nations zero-tolerance policy and the Secretary-General's related efforts to strengthen its implementation.

Sexual exploitation and abuse inflict significant harm on vulnerable communities, the very communities that look to the United Nations for protection and assistance in some of the world's most dangerous places. They also undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of United Nations field operations, agencies, funds and programmes, particularly when those responsible are not held accountable for their deplorable actions. The United States welcomes the possibility of future engagement with Member States on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

The United States strongly supports the authority of the Secretary-General to take necessary measures to implement the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Today we reaffirm that we must all continue to do our utmost to address this scourge wherever it may exist within the United Nations system, and to promote accountability for the perpetrators of such unacceptable acts.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 131?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.